Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand three hundred and eighty-ninth plenary meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 7 June 2016, at 10.05 a.m.

President: Mr. Luis Enrique Chávez Basagoitia .....(Peru)

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The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call to order the 1389th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Distinguished colleagues, as I set out in my opening statement last Tuesday, 31 May, my intention as President is to concentrate my efforts on informal consultations with a view to securing consensus on a proposed programme of work this year. While no tangible outcome in that regard has yet emerged from my ongoing consultations, I am pleased to discern some movement, although it is still too early to refer to that as concrete progress. As I have said, I will nonetheless continue my consultations with enthusiasm and will keep the Conference constantly apprised of developments.

A number of delegations have asked that, while the informal consultations are under way, we make productive use of our time in the plenary meetings. Accordingly, I think it would be appropriate, for the duration of my consultations on the programme of work, to devote our plenary meetings to statements from delegations wishing to speak in relation to the various items on the agenda. This should not be understood as a request for delegations to make statements on each and every agenda item, but simply that I will give the floor to any delegations wishing to speak on issues in which they have a particular interest.

As delegations will need a reasonable amount of time to prepare their statements, I will convene two plenary meetings for the aforementioned purposes on the mornings of Tuesday, 14 June, and Thursday, 16 June. My idea is to devote Tuesday, 14 June, to discussion of the first four agenda items, namely: cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament; prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters; prevention of an arms race in outer space; and effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. On Thursday, 16 June, I plan to give the floor to any delegations wishing to speak on agenda items 5, 6 and 7: new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons, radiological weapons; comprehensive programme of disarmament; and transparency in armaments.

I would like to assure you that should these two meetings not be sufficient for everyone who so wishes to take the floor, I can convene a third plenary meeting in order that all delegations may have an opportunity to express their views on all issues. Having said that, I kindly ask that statements be kept as concise as possible so that the Conference can make productive use of its time.

As I hear no objections, I thank you for your understanding and ask that you make preparations to begin this exercise next Tuesday. I have been asked for the floor by the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh, who wishes to make a statement. Ambassador Ahsan, you have the floor.

Mr. Ahsan (Bangladesh): As I am taking the floor for the first time during your presidency, let me commence by congratulating you, Mr. President, on assuming this important task. I also would like to commend the previous Presidents of this year for their successful steering of the Conference on Disarmament. We hope that, with your wisdom and experience, you will be able to create new momentum in our collective efforts towards the adoption of a programme of work for the Conference.

It is indeed of great concern to us that the Conference on Disarmament — the world's sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum — continues to remain in its stalemate of the last two decades. This is, I would say, an alarming impasse, as this body's success is of paramount importance for humankind. The long-lasting deadlock in this Conference, along with the lack of consensus at the recent Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, the pending entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the similar stand-off being experienced in the United Nations Disarmament Commission, are all causing the majority of the international community more and more frustration day by day, all the more so because progress in nuclear disarmament appears as a distant goal in terms of the near future. This situation is unacceptable, to say the least.

Bangladesh, in line with the position of the Group of 21, wishes to reiterate that the highest priority on the Conference's agenda must be given to nuclear disarmament. This is indeed the raison d'être of the Conference on Disarmament. Bangladesh has constitutional

obligations with regard to unconditional and complete disarmament, and it therefore is a State party to all major international instruments on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Bangladesh believes that nuclear weapons are the biggest security threat for the whole of humankind, as their very existence poses the risk of total destruction. Therefore, effective implementation of concrete measures leading to a nuclear-weapon-free world is an inevitable requirement for the international community to ensure a safe world for the next generations. The sooner we do that, the better. Therefore, we believe that immediate commencement of negotiations on nuclear disarmament is the call of the day.

We are optimistic that the new proposals received this year for the Conference's future programme of work will give an impetus to our efforts to reactivate this forum. However, at the same time, it is well understood that without the political will of different quarters, this would be a distant cry. The rules of procedure of the Conference should not be blamed for this. We hope that the international community, especially the nuclear-weapon States and States having a strategic role for nuclear weapons in their security doctrines, would redouble their efforts to bridge the gap between them in this regard.

Mr. President, it is obvious that when the voice of the silent majorities continued to be ignored, they would rightfully proceed towards a solution eventually. This was the case in the General Assembly last year when the resolution establishing the Open-ended Working Group for taking forward the negotiations on nuclear disarmament was adopted with an overwhelming majority; Bangladesh supported the resolution and attended the Open-ended Working Group sessions in February and May this year. The nuclear-weapon States and allies should realize that the progress achieved in non-proliferation and in reducing stockpiles is not sufficient. Also, a full understanding of the devastating humanitarian consequences of a nuclear detonation — as advocated by the United Nations Secretary-General and the conferences held on this topic — should be taken into consideration. We would also like to remind all nuclear-weapon States parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty about their unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament, to which all States parties have committed under article VI. Taking all this into account, we must make real efforts to revitalize the Conference on Disarmament through the urgent decision to commence negotiations on nuclear disarmament leading to the eventual and complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

Bangladesh believes some items — namely, negative security assurances, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and a fissile material cut-off treaty — are important elements on the agenda in the Conference on Disarmament. We also support further discussions on issues such as cybersecurity, lethal autonomous weapons systems and chemical and biological terrorism. However, none of these items should be prioritized over the issue of nuclear disarmament. We are ready to work proactively and constructively with other Conference member States in adopting a programme of work based on existing and future proposals and support any of your and successive Presidents' efforts to build consensus in that regard.

Mr. President, we cannot afford to allow this drift in the Conference any longer. The threat of nuclear weapons is a real and existential one for us, having three nuclear Powers in our close proximity. The incontrovertible challenge faced by the international community in this century, particularly by the developing countries, is to ensure socioeconomic progress for their peoples. That has been eminently recognized in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. The financing gap to realize this huge challenge could easily be addressed if the enormous global defence expenditure were reduced and resources diverted for these purposes. Only this can eventually ensure peace, prosperity and ultimate security in the world, which security doctrines based on nuclear weapons cannot. We must rely on multilateralism to ensure a secure and prosperous world for our children and for generations to come. We therefore call upon all parties concerned, and especially the nuclear-weapon States, to rethink and come up with new approaches, with the necessary political will to take the calls for complete and unconditional disarmament farther forward, especially in this august forum.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Permanent Representative for his statement, his kind words and his expression of support for the presidency.

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Are there any further requests for the floor? Chile has the floor.

Mr. Lagos (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, as this is the first time my delegation has taken the floor under your presidency, I wish to voice our satisfaction at your election, not only because of your recognized diplomatic skills but as the representative of a brotherly country from our region, with which we share a common vision in the sphere of disarmament. We support your efforts and your consultations so that we may adopt a programme of work. We know that this is no easy task, but with the cooperation and political will of all, we can advance towards this goal.

Mr. President, we will state our position on the various agenda items during the meetings that you have just convened for that purpose.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Chile for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. I see no other requests for the floor. We will therefore conclude our meeting of today. I wish to remind you that the next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Tuesday, 14 June, at 10 a.m. As previously stated, I will give the floor to delegations wishing to speak on the first four items on our agenda. Thank you very much for your cooperation. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 10.20 a.m.